

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 02461 272317Z

70

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05 CIEP-01

TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 CAB-02 CIAE-00

COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 JUSE-00

H-02 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 IGA-02 /072 W

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P 271550Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3603

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2461

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BDIS, NI

SUBJECT: OBASANJO ASKS ABOUT LOCKHEED "BRIBES OF NIGERIANS"

1. AT MEA PERSEC SANUSI'S REQUEST, I MET WITH HIM, SPECIAL ASSISTANT ADESHOLA AND AMERICAN DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR UCHUNO AT NOON TODAY TO DISCUSS NEWS MEDIA CHARGES OF LOCKHEED'S BRIBING NIGERIAN OFFICIALS. ECON COUNSELOR CAHILL ALSO PRESENT AT MEETING.

2. AFTER GIVING HIS AND THE MINISTRY'S APOLOGIES FOR THE "RECENT DISTURBANCES" AT THE EMBASSY AND THEIR GRATITUDE FOR EMBASSY'S HAVING HANDLED THE MATTER "WITH DISCRETION". SANUSI EXPLAINED THAT HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO HAD CALLED HIM FROM DODAN BARRACKS EARLY THIS MORNING REQUESTING THAT MEA CONTACT THE EMBASSY FOR INFORMATION ON LOCKHEED'S ALLEGED BRIBING OF NIGERIAN OFFICIALS. OBASANJO HAD READ THE LOCKHEED SCANDAL ARTICLE IN THE NEWSWEEK ISSUE WHICH HAD APPEARED ON LAGOS STREETS FEBRUARY 26, AND SPECIFICALLY WANTED TO KNOW WHICH OFFICIALS HAD ACCEPTED THE REPORTED 3.6 MILLION DOLLARS PAYOFF.

3. SANUSI COMMENTED THAT MORAL PRINCIPLE WAS THE ISSUE, NOT THE SIZE OF THE BRIBE. HE ASKED IF THE EMBASSY COULD UNEARTH ANY PERTINENT

INFORMATION AND RELAY IT TO THE FMG. AS IT WAS APPARENT THAT NONE OF
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PAGE 02 LAGOS 02461 272317Z

THE THREE MEA OFFICIALS HAD SEEN THE MAGAZINE, I GAVE THEM A COPY

(SANUSI HAVING TOLD ME WHAT HE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT WHEN HE PHONED ME TO COME).

4. I EXPLAINED THAT OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE ALLEGED BRIBERY ACTION CAME FROM THE SAME NEWSWEEK STORY IN WHICH THE MAGAZINE CLAIMED TO HAVE GAINED

ACCESS TO AS YET OFFICIALLY UNRELEASED CHURCH COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS. WE THEN BRIEFLY REVIEWED WHAT THE EMBASSY KNEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE SALE OF SIX LOCKHEED C-130S, CULMINATING IN A ROUGHLY 45 MILLION DOLLAR AGREEMENT (6.4 MILLION DOLLARS PER PLANE PLUS FEE FOR TRAINING AND SUPPORT SERVICES) SIGNED IN SEPTEMBER 1974; FOUR OF THE SIX PLANES HAD BEEN DELIVERED. I OFFERED TO CHECK WITH THE DEPT IN AN EFFORT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BRIBERY CHARGES, INCLUDING THE IDENTITY OF THE RECIPIENTS IF AVAILABLE, TO MEA. SANUSI AND COLLEAGUES

EXPRESSED THEIR APPRECIATION AND SAID THEY WOULD UNDERSTAND IF THE DESIRED DATA COULD NOT BE OBTAINED.

5. FRONT PAGE HEADLINES OF TODAY'S DAILY TIMES WERE: "SCANDAL THAT ROCKS THE WORLD--NAIRA 2 MILLION BRIBE POSER FOR NIGERIANS--WHO GOT KICKBACK FROM AMERICAN LOCKHEED?" OPENING SENTENCE OF LEAD ARTICLE: CORPORATION--DISHING OUT BRIBE MUD AROUND THE WORLD."

6. COMMENT: RELEASE OF FURTHER INFORMATION TO FMG BEFORE IT MAY BE PUBLICIZED IN NEWS MEDIA WOULD CLEARLY BE APPRECIATED BY CURRENT GOVERNMENT LEADERS HERE, MIGHT AVOID SOME POSSIBLE EMBARRASSMENT, AND SHOULD GAIN US NEEDED GOODWILL AT HIGHEST FMG LEVEL IN CURRENT XENOPHOBIC ENVIRONMENT WHERE WE COULD USE A BOOST OR TWO. FYI: IRONICALLY IN RETROSPECT, I BELIEVE I CORRECTLY RECALL THAT GOWON WANTED THE LOCKHEED PURCHASE TO BE UNDER FMS PROCEDURES PRECISELY BECAUSE HE FEARED CORRUPT PRACTICES OF AGENTS AND THOUGHT HE COULD BY-PASS THEM THROUGH FMS DEAL. FMG FINALLY DECIDED TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH LOCKHEED BECAUSE THE COMPANY PROMISED EARLIER DELIVERY THAN WAS SAID TO BE POSSIBLE UNDER FMS.)

7. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, EVEN IF ON INTERIM BASIS ONLY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LAGOS02461
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760075-0348
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976026/aaaaaehf.tel
Line Count: 99
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 JUL 2004 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <14 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OBASANJO ASKS ABOUT LOCKHEED "BRIBES OF NIGERIANS"
TAGS: BDIS, NI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006